

Thursday, September 18, 2008

[From the Coeur d'Alene Press](#)

- Candidates take stand on kids' issues

[From the Spokesman-Review](#)

- No education news stories posted online today.

[From the Moscow Pullman Daily News \(password required\)](#)

- UI moving forward with hiring 'pause,' strategic action plan
- OUR VIEW: Grades not an accurate reflection of education (editorial)
- HIS VIEW: University of Idaho: A legacy of not leading (editorial)
- POTLATCH: School board calls special meeting for tonight

[From the Lewiston Tribune \(password required\)](#)

- UI president: Stick with WWAMI for med school

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- Nationwide anti-bullying campaign teaches children how to help stop violence
- Otter wants new system to produce Idaho doctors
- Want to save for college? Help is available (editorial)

[From the Idaho Statesman](#)

- ISU receives grant to establish suicide prevention hotline with operators in Boise, Pocatello

[From the Twin Falls Times-News](#)

- No education news stories posted online today.

[From the Idaho State Journal \(password Required\)](#)

- SchoolDiStrict25 SeekSnewbonDS
- Speaking for students
- School superintendent defends bus transfer protocol for Blackfoot kids

[From the Idaho Falls Post Register \(password required\)](#)

- Classroom buzz

FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

No new education stories posted online today.

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Authorities targeting speeders in school zones

Jody Lawrence-Turner
Staff writer
September 17, 2008

More than 300 drivers have been ticketed for speeding in school zones in the Inland Northwest since Sept. 2, authorities say.

Coeur d'Alene Police wrote 62 citations in the first two weeks, said spokeswoman Sgt. Christie Wood.

Spokane Police ticketed 28 drivers during the first week school was in session, officials said. No data was available for the second week.

The flashing yellow lights installed in school zones this year has helped slow drivers down, Spokane Police Officer Teresa Fuller said.

Spokane County Sheriff's Office has written 59 tickets since the beginning of the school year, and Washington State Patrol has issued more than 200 tickets in Spokane and Spokane County since Sept. 2.

For speeders caught in Washington, the penalty can be pretty high. If someone is caught speeding in a school zone, the fine ranges between \$189 and \$784 depending on how many miles over the speed limit a motorist is going, officials said. Motorists face a \$116.50 fine for speeding in a school zone in Coeur d'Alene.

"Coeur d'Alene Police will continue to enforce the school zone laws with zero tolerance," Wood said.

The areas that remain a concern are areas around Ramsey Elementary and Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy along Kathleen Avenue, and St. Michelle Drive and Kathleen Avenue near Woodland Middle School, Wood said.

WSP troopers and Spokane authorities also will continue to monitor the areas around schools.

Fortunately, nothing tragic has happened in a long time, said WSP Trooper Mark Baker.

Gov. Otter unhappy with doctor program

Governor says WWAMI can't supply Idaho's need

Associated Press
September 17, 2008

BOISE — A program to send Idaho students to Seattle to train them as doctors has fallen short, Gov. Butch Otter said.

Otter, speaking Monday to a legislative committee on medical education, said the program that reserves spots for Idaho students at the University of Washington School of Medicine is not up to meeting an increasing need for doctors in the state.

The program allows students from Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho to attend the UW for the same tuition paid by Washington students. The program, known as WWAMI, encourages graduates to choose careers in family practice medicine and to work in their home states.

Most recently, the program was expanded to provide 20 spots for first-year medical students to train in Spokane, as reported Sunday in The Spokesman-Review.

"I'm terribly disappointed in WWAMI," Otter told the committee, the Idaho State Journal reported. "It's not doing its job."

Otter's statements contradict those made to legislators in January by Tim White, then-president of the University of Idaho. White had high praise for WWAMI, saying that 305 Idaho-funded graduates were practicing in the state, including 37 percent of Idaho's family practice physicians.

Yet, Otter said Monday that the state doesn't retain enough WWAMI students.

There's a nationwide shortage of doctors in rural areas, the American Medical Association has reported. But Idaho is worse off than most states, ranking 49th in number of doctors per capita. Forty percent of the state's physicians are 55 or older, making it the sixth-oldest group of physicians in the nation, the AMA reports.

After Otter spoke Monday, the committee heard from Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas, who wants to create a medical school at ISU. He said the state could get its own medical school by 2011 if it passes the various levels of accreditation.

Both UI and Boise State University favor expanding WWAMI rather than creating an Idaho medical school.

In his January comments, White said that states with medical schools retain only 40 percent of their graduates, compared to "a rather stunning 70 percent return" with WWAMI.

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

UI moving forward with hiring 'pause,' strategic action plan

Provost will present options to president, other administrators Thursday

Posted on: Tuesday, September 16, 2008

University of Idaho Provost Doug Baker will present several options for the university's hiring "pause" to President Steven Daley-Laursen and other university administrators Thursday.

Baker met Monday with the Provost's Council, which is composed of deans and vice provosts, to begin developing criteria for which positions will be filled as the university reorganizes and prioritizes its programs.

"We kicked around a variety of potential processes but the president asked that we talk those over with his cabinet later this week," Baker said.

Daley-Laursen outlined a "strategic action plan" for the university during fall address last week. He called for an indefinite pause on new hires and a reallocation of resources between departments and colleges.

Baker said the Provost's Council's goal was to lay all of the possible processes on the table for discussion.

"I thought it was a great set of discussions today," Baker said. He declined to provide details until the president and representatives from different areas of the university have a chance to consider the "infinite" possibilities.

"We should have some communication coming out after that, outlining how we're going to put together a strategic prioritization process, how that process will be put together, and the timeline for that process," Baker said.

University faculty and staff received a letter from Baker on Monday that further explained the hiring pause.

"To be clear: If your unit has an open position for which the approved posting and search process had not begun as of the close of business last week, Friday, September 12, 2008, that position is now subject to a hold," Baker wrote.

Baker said he now will ask each college dean to present a list of positions they believe are strategic or necessary.

For example, Baker said grant-supported positions that need to be filled to receive funding most likely will be exempt from the pause.

He said university faculty and staff can expect further communication in the coming weeks.

OUR VIEW: Grades not an accurate reflection of education (editorial)

By Doug Bauer

Posted on: Tuesday, September 16, 2008

Students who get good grades aren't necessarily getting a quality education.

It has long been assumed that high school students with a decent grade-point average will succeed at the college level. That isn't always the case, however, according to a recent study that determined one-third of American college students need remedial education once they arrive on campus.

College and universities end up paying the price, to the tune of \$2.3 billion to \$2.9 billion each year.

The statistic is disappointing, the dollar figure staggering - but neither is surprising.

The report, titled "Diploma to Nowhere," was released Monday. According to The Associated Press, an estimated 43 percent of community college students and 29 percent of students at public four-year universities require remediation in English, math or both, with higher numbers in some places than others.

The cost per student is as high as \$2,000 in community colleges and \$2,500 in four-year universities.

Educational benchmarks can't be measured by letter grades alone. Students need to be challenged, and that's not happening at schools throughout the country. Grades and the difficulty by which they're awarded vary from district to district, school to school and teacher to teacher.

Grades are artificially inflated in some cases, and students who believe they're ready for college are learning they're not adequately equipped once they get there.

"We're not expecting enough of our youngsters and the institutions that train them," said former Colorado Gov. Roy Romer, who is chairman of the group that issued the report.

Something needs to be done to better align the standards of K-12 schools with those of public colleges and universities. But the conversation can't begin if teachers, administrators and education officials approach the problem in a unilateral manner.

Admitting there is a problem is the first step toward solving it.

HIS VIEW: University of Idaho: A legacy of not leading (commentary)

By Henry D. Johnston

Posted on: Tuesday, September 16, 2008

As humans we expect a certain margin of error in everything. Mistakes do happen and, in business, a good manager knows and understands that principle.

I'm pretty forgiving when it comes to mistakes made by my employees. Most of my employees are young, so the threshold for the number of mistakes made is a little higher than normal.

That threshold should not be set high, however, with the administration of a major university.

With the departure of President Tim White and a nationwide search for a replacement, I think it's high time for the State Board of Education to take a look at the track record of some other high-ranking UI executives.

I'm talking, of course, about Vice President of Finance and Administration Lloyd Mues.

When news broke this spring that the Life on Wheels RV event was moving to Lewiston, many in our community raised an eyebrow. Mues was at the forefront of that issue, claiming it was simply a "contract discrepancy" and that there was no falling out of any kind.

That "discrepancy" cost the Moscow economy an estimated \$500,000 and the chance for the event to return to Moscow in the future.

I accepted the fact that sometimes mistakes happen and that maybe Mues wasn't entirely to blame.

Imagine my surprise then when I picked up the Daily News last Monday only to find another front page story involving the esteemed administrator.

In case you're not aware, Mues is leading the charge to cut the university's funding of the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport. His reasons range from the liability of having a campus representative on the airport's board to the \$20,000 annual contribution made by the university toward the airport budget.

According to Mues, the UI won't commit to a "long term financial arrangement" and that "we live in a time of tight resources."

Tight resources?

Has Mues forgotten about the \$900,000 that the university spent on the now-defunct "Open Space. Open Minds" ad campaign that was also responsible for killing the longstanding starburst

logo? I don't blame him directly for that gaffe, but there was enough money spent on that project to fund the airport at current levels for the next 45 years.

It was Mues, however, who called the \$14,000 spent on Tim White's going-away festivities "money well spent." Those events included fancy food, videos, vases and tree-plantings. Money well spent indeed.

In the interest of full disclosure I will admit that the funding of White's events came from "unrestricted dollars," which are donations to the university that may be used at the complete discretion of the administration.

Which begs the question of why they can't use some of those same contributions to fund the airport? If you eliminate the bond repayment that is set to expire, the contribution really only is equal to \$12,500 a year, which is far less than what was spent for White's going-away parties.

I know plenty of alumni who enjoy being able to fly directly into the Pullman-Moscow airport so they can support the Vandal football team at the Kibbie Dome. I'd venture a guess that with proper planning and marketing enough "unrestricted funds" could be raised to continue the UI's contribution to the airport.

The airport is the gateway for bigger and better things on the Palouse, including the growth and success of both universities as well as both Latah and Whitman counties. I'm surprised that Mues is willing to just walk away from the airport instead of figuring out a way to help the venture grow.

We need administrators at the University of Idaho who not only have the best interest of the university at heart but the interests of the community as well. An "isolation" mentality will not work for the university if it wants to win the favor of the locals.

For a school that touts a "Legacy of Leading," the administration sure doesn't seem to get it. I sure hope the new president does and hires a staff that does as well.

POTLATCH: School board calls special meeting for tonight

Posted on: Tuesday, September 16, 2008

The Potlatch school board will have a special meeting today at 6 p.m. in the Potlatch High School Library.

The meeting was called by board chairman Doug Scoville to review the status of the Lighthouse Study, a program designed to examine the relationship between school board activity and student achievement, and to discuss an ongoing teacher salary dispute.

Scoville said the board intends to make a new offer to Potlatch teachers for their 2008-09 salaries, but will meet tonight to make sure all members are on the same page.

Teacher raises have been a topic of dispute between the Potlatch Education Association and the school district since November.

The teachers requested a 5-percent raise, while the district offered only 2.5 percent.

The board decided to re-examine its salary offer after an eight-hour fact-finding hearing Sept. 9. If the teachers accept the board's offer, further fact-finding services will be unnecessary.

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

UI president: Stick with WWAMI for med school

Gov. Otter says program doesn't keep enough doctors in Idaho

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

MOSCOW - The president of the University of Idaho said training doctors out of state is still Idaho's best option for medical education, despite the governor's statement Monday he was "disappointed" with the program.

Steven Daley-Laursen, the UI's interim president, said other options weighed by an interim legislative committee could sacrifice the quality and efficiency of the Wyoming, Washington, Alaska, Montana and Idaho program that sends medical students to the University of Washington.

"We should not set ourselves up with a vision bigger than what Idaho can accomplish with some empire within the state that throws away leverage externally, and causes a drop in our quality," Daley-Laursen said. "I have no tolerance for that."

In a statement issued through his spokesman, Idaho Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter said he was only disappointed with WWAMI's record of keeping the doctors it trains in Idaho.

"We haven't managed that program to retain those doctors," Otter said in a recorded statement meant to clarify comments he made to the committee Monday. "Not that it hasn't worked. It's worked and it's worked well for the students that participated in it that become good doctors.

"Unfortunately, a disproportionate share is not staying in Idaho."

He said expanding WWAMI, as the UI has long proposed, is still a viable option.

Daley-Laursen said WWAMI has one of the highest home placement rates of any medical education program in the country. And it does it as cheaply as possible by expanding an established program, not investing heavily in a completely new model, he added.

"We have a quality program in place," he said. "It does what people want. It gets extremely high retention of doctors we educate."

Andrew Turner, the WWAMI director at the UI, said the program has a 50 percent retention rate, compared to a 39 percent national average. He said university officials would work to make Otter and the committee aware of that statistic over the next couple of months.

"I think he would actually like to see 100 percent," Turner said of Otter's hopes for the program.

But that would be unrealistic, he said. As evidence, he cited Wyoming's participation in WWAMI. That state pays for all of its students' tuition and fees at UW in exchange for signing a three-year contract to practice medicine in Wyoming, he said.

"And their return rate is only 80 percent," Turner said.

Idaho students pay for their own participation in the program.

Daley-Laursen said he feared what would happen to other priorities if the state decides to opt for something it can't afford, like a medical school.

"We need to not gut all funding for higher education and push it in one direction," he said. "We have multiple needs for the funding of higher education, and this is just one."

He and Turner attended the committee meeting Monday in Boise where Otter initially made his comments about WWAMI.

At the meeting, Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas promoted his proposal to establish an in-state medical school as early as 2011.

Idaho is facing a shortage of medical professionals, especially in rural areas, as doctors retire or move elsewhere. Otter spokesman Jon Hanian said Idaho ranks 49th in the nation in doctors per capita, according to the American Medical Association, and 40 percent of its doctors are 55 or older.

Hanian said Otter considers all options still on the table, including the UI's proposed initial expansion of WWAMI to 40 seats, up from 20 currently.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

Nationwide anti-bullying campaign teaches children how to help stop violence

NAMPA — Nampa schools hold activities this week as part of a nationwide program to keep schools safe.

Officials created Bullying Awareness Week to draw attention to bullying-prevention efforts in schools, Allison Westfall, spokeswoman for the Nampa School District, said.

While efforts are made throughout the school year, Westfall said the Nampa School District had participated in the national program for only a few years.

"It's something that is really going on in schools all year 'round, but it's a good time to talk about them. It helps draw attention to what schools are doing to work with children of all ages to address this behavior," she said.

Westfall said all Nampa schools have special activities planned this week, ranging from assemblies and guest speakers to visiting firefighters, police officers and Nampa Mayor Tom Dale. Fire and police personnel will participate in a game of tug-of-war against staff and students at Nampa High School and firefighters will "wash out bullying" by demonstrating their hose power on a bully dummy.

Students also will have the opportunity to wear some fire gear and shoot the water cannon across campus.

Nampa elementary teachers will make character trait lessons fun this week by using food and various other objects.

Vallivue starts activities

Birch Elementary kicked off its Safe School Awareness Week with an assembly on Tuesday.

"'Safe School' has a more positive sound than bullying," Viki Turley, Birch Elementary's safe schools coordinator, said.

About 630 elementary students sat on the school's gymnasium floor while the Vallivue High School choir performed songs and skits and school officials spoke about how to keep the school safe. Dale told students to be kind to each other. "Look for the good in people," he said. "If you treat others the way you want to be treated, we won't have a problem with bullies and you're going to have an incredible school year."

Superintendent George Grant cautioned students about Internet use and encouraged them to ask permission to use a computer at home and to always share what they look at with their parents.

"You are extremely valuable young people," he said. "You are very important to us."

School Resource Officer Jason Moores and McGruff the Crime Dog taught students about bullies, victims and bystanders.

"As a bystander you have a responsibility to stop the threat of violence against someone; you have a really great opportunity to help someone in need," Moores said. "I'm excited for you guys to step up and help me because I can't be everywhere at one time."

Officer visits school

Turley said Moores provides security and training at the school one day a week this year, while last year an officer only came to the school when there was a problem.

"We're really cracking down on safety this year," she said.

Moores' time in the classroom includes lessons on Internet bullying, physical bullying, playground safety and how to play safely off school grounds.

"A lot of these problems start at home," Turley said.

Birch Elementary Principal Greg Scheele said the Safe School Awareness assembly was the first of nine monthly assemblies that teach students to show good character throughout the year.

“We celebrate a character trait every month. This month it’s teamwork,” he said. “This is a nice way to kick off the year.”

Otter wants new system to produce Idaho doctors

The Associated Press

BOISE — A program to send Idaho students to Seattle to train them as doctors so they can then return home to practice has fallen short, Gov. Butch Otter said.

Otter, speaking Monday to a joint interim legislative committee on medical education, said the program that reserves spots for Idaho students at the University of Washington School of Medicine is not up to meeting an increasing need for doctors in the state.

The program allows students from Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho to attend the medical school in Seattle for the same tuition paid by Washington students. The program, known as WWAMI, encourages graduates to choose careers in family practice medicine and to work in the Northwest.

“I’m terribly disappointed in WWAMI,” Otter told the committee, the Idaho State Journal reported. “It’s not doing its job.”

The Idaho WWAMI office in Moscow did not immediately return a call from The Associated Press on Tuesday concerning how many Idaho doctors the program has produced.

Otter later clarified his comments and said the program has produced good doctors coming from Idaho, but that the state hasn’t been able to retain enough of them once they have finished the program.

Idaho ranks 49th in the nation in doctors per 100,000 residents, according to the American Medical Association. The AMA says 40 percent of Idaho physicians are 55 or older, making it the sixth-oldest group of physicians in the nation.

Jon Hanian, Otter’s spokesman, said the governor is concerned the current program will not be able to produce Idaho doctors fast enough to replace those who retire.

After Otter spoke Monday, the committee heard from Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas, who wants to create a medical school at ISU.

He said the state could get its own medical school by 2011 if it passes the various levels of accreditation.

Members of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, the group in charge of granting full accreditation to medical programs, also attended the meeting.

Both the University of Idaho and Boise State University are in favor of expanding WWAMI rather than creating a medical school in Idaho.

Bruce Newcomb, BSU’s director of government affairs, said the school is concerned that a medical school would take away money it needs to support other programs.

“We do not believe that a rush to create a medical school using this model is the best solution to meet the needs of students and the population at this moment in time,” Newcomb wrote in a memo to the committee.

Want to save for college? Help is available (editorial)

There's no doubt, the tough economic times of late have affected our everyday lives. Everything from gas to groceries costs more. And while it's prudent to look to our family budgets for cost-cutting strategies, during this College Savings Month, I urge Idahoans to continue saving for their kids' college educations.

Every little bit adds up, and the investment can help children receive the college education they deserve. The numbers speak for themselves.

If today you started putting \$25 a month into your five-year-old's college savings account, over the next 12 years (assuming an 8 percent annual growth rate compounded monthly, tax-deferred), your child would start college in the fall of 2020 with an account balance of around \$6,118. If you were to wait until next year, you could sacrifice \$758. Or, if you waited five years from now to start saving, you could sacrifice as much as \$3,253 in college funds.

Time is on your side. You don't want to lose a single day taking advantage of this mathematical magic, no matter how difficult it may be to save right now.

The other thing to remember is, these tough times won't last forever. Higher education pays. The College Board's "Education Pays" study show that, on average, a person with an associate's degree earns \$500,000 more over their lifetime than someone with just a high school diploma. This figure jumps to over \$800,000 for someone with a bachelor's degree.

And while saving may be difficult right now, there is a program in my office called IDEal – Idaho College Savings Program that can help get you started. IDEal is Idaho's 529 college savings program that lets parents, grandparents, family and friends save for their children's college education.

IDEal is easy to open and comes with advantageous tax benefits. Earnings in this plan grow tax-deferred, and withdrawals for qualified educational expenses, including books, certain room and board costs, tuition and fees, are tax-exempt. And the account funds can be used for colleges outside of Idaho.

Another advantage of IDEal is that Idaho taxpayers can enjoy a state income tax deduction of up to \$4,000 a year (\$8,000 if married, filing jointly). In addition to building savings tax-deferred, IDEal offers the ability for account owners to increase their savings through two innovative programs: UgiftSM — Give College Savings and the Upromise rewards service.

With Ugift, account owners can invite family and friends to celebrate a child's milestones with a gift contribution to an IDEal account. Upromise rewards is a free service that helps families earn money for college with everyday spending at hundreds of America's leading companies.

So while the economy continues to struggle and it costs more to fill our gas tanks, it is important to take the long view when it comes to our children's future. A little bit of savings really can add up. \$25 per month is a reasonable investment to help fund a college education and give the opportunity for a bright and prosperous future for the child in your life.

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

ISU receives grant to establish suicide prevention hotline with operators in Boise, Pocatello

Edition Date: 09/16/08

Idaho State University's Institute of Rural Health and Counseling Department has received a state grant to establish a suicide prevention hotline with trained crisis operators based at ISU's campuses in Pocatello and Boise.

The 24-hour hotline will begin operating in September 2009, according to Ann Kirkwood, the ISU-Boise senior research associate who will be setting up the hotline.

The hotline will be staffed with master's and doctoral students in counseling, community volunteers and some paid staff.

Kirkwood said the first two years of the hotline is being funded by a \$375,000 grant from the Idaho Legislature, part of state appropriations for mental health programs.

A previous Idaho-based suicide prevention hotline was closed in 2007. Since then, operators with the national suicide prevention hotline Lifeline have been handling all the calls from Idahoans in crisis.

Lifeline operators aren't able to provide Idaho information or referrals to mental health resources in the state. Advocates of an Idaho-based hotline say the local hotline is particularly important to rural residents, who don't have easy access to mental health resources.

In a press release Tuesday, Idaho State University offered the following suicide data for Idaho:

- Idaho's overall suicide rate averaged over five years is 16 per 100,000 population and the national rate is 11. Idaho consistently ranks in the top 10 states for its rate of suicide.
- A Lifeline report for 2007 said 40 percent of calls from Idaho came from Ada County with another 40 percent from Canyon, Kootenai and Bannock counties.
- Rural suicide rates in Idaho are high, most of them above the national rates. Rural areas with the highest suicide rates in Idaho are Boundary, Elmore, Bear Lake and Valley counties.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK); TTY (1-800-799-4889).

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

Otter wants new system to produce Idaho doctors

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Information from: Idaho State Journal, <http://www.journalnet.com>

A service of the Associated Press(AP)

School District 25 Seeks New Bonds

School needs funds for budget, building project

POCATELLO — Next year, School District 25 could ask taxpayers to pass a pair of bond levies — one for supplemental money to buoy its budget and the other to fund a sizable expansion to Edahow Elementary.

The supplemental bond levy requires a special election every two years in February. The last time it was on the ballot, 83 percent of voters approved it at \$6 million. Officials are still assessing how much the levy will be in 2009 but should determine the number by December or January.

The construction levy is needed to fund an addition to Edahow Elementary, which will nearly double the school's student capacity from 350 to 650 at a projected cost of between \$8 and \$8.5 million. The tentative plan is to have the project completed for the 2010-11 school year. That would require a special election by March.

"We are sensitive to the impact that would have on taxpayers," said District 25 Business Manager Bart Reed, speaking about the construction levy.

Reed said the need for the supplemental levy stems from flat state funding of discretionary money, which pays for increases in utility, transportation and insurance expenses, among other fixed costs. While the cost of those items has risen at about 14 to 15 percent during the past year, the State Department of Education's proposed budget for next year only provides for a 1 percent increase.

The levy currently accounts for about 9 percent of the district's general budget.

Reed said that 60 of Idaho's 114 school districts now rely on supplemental levies.

"That number has steadily increased over the past couple of decades," Reed said.

Supplemental levies require a simple majority of 50 percent plus one vote to pass in Idaho.

As far as the construction levy goes, Reed said the matter is not set in stone. For that levy to pass, it would need two-thirds of voters to approve it.

A committee recommended last school year that the Edahow expansion is the best way to reduce school overcrowding, which is an ongoing problem in the Pocatello Creek and Chubbuck areas. It was exacerbated this year by an enrollment increase of about 170 students at the elementary level — the steepest jump the district has experienced in at least 15 years.

Other options on the table are to integrate the sixthgrade students into middle school or move them as one group into an existing building with available space, such as the Alameda Center. That building, a former junior high school, now houses the district's alternative programs, which total about 200 students.

This year, the district is bussing more than 100 elementary students in various grades from overcrowded schools to surrounding schools as a short-term solution.

Speaking for students

Student reps to sit in on school board meetings

POCATELLO — Taryn Rowe and Kire Barraza will take turns representing Highland High at upcoming District 25 School Board meetings.

Barraza, a 16-year-old junior, said the volunteer duty will give them an inside perspective on how the district works and offer them an opportunity to let the board know what's going on at HHS.

The girls are serving on the board as representatives of Highland's student body government. They had their orientation prior to last night's board meeting at the Education Center, 3115 Pole Line Road. The student representatives from Pocatello, Century and New Horizon high schools will also attend Dist. 25 meetings.

"I love being a leader and having a say in what our school does — just being a decision maker," Barraza said of student government.

Rowe, a 17-year-old senior, said it's personally satisfying being asked to serve with the district's trustees and superintendent.

"It's nice not to be just another student — to be recognized on a more personal level for who you are and what you've done," Rowe said.

Highland Principal David Ross said Rowe and Barraza set good examples for their peers. They are involved in several extra curricular activities and excel at all of them.

Ross said the school board position is a perfect opportunity for top students to represent their classmates at a higher level. "I think it's a great concept to get our student body involved," Ross said. "These two ladies will be excellent representatives for our school. They have an active role in everything."

In addition to being involved in student government — Rowe is student body vice president and Barraza is the junior class public relations specialist — the two girls are both academic achievers who take college level classes. They hope that by doing so, they can earn enough credits to start college as sophomores rather than freshmen.

Rowe is also Highland's Key Club secretary, a co-president of Junior Civitan and competes on the varsity tennis team. Barraza is involved in Key Club, is secretary of Idaho Drug Free Youth and co-president of THE Club, a human rights organization for youth.

School superintendent defends bus transfer protocol for Blackfoot kids

BLACKFOOT — Superintendent Scott Crane said every measure that can be employed to keep students safe during bus transfers is being taken in the Blackfoot School District. His comments come in the wake of an incident in which a kindergarten student was left at an elementary school last week.

Crane declined to comment specifically about the 5-year-old boy who was left at Stoddart Elementary during a bus transfer but said he was satisfied with the current bus system.

"We go above and beyond to ensure the safety of our students," Crane said.

The Irving Elementary School kindergarten student rode the bus to Stoddart but failed to transfer to a second bus that would have transported him home.

The boy's location was unknown for about 30 minutes.

Crane said two separate kindergarten buses transfer at Stoddart. The pre-schoolers are provided color-coded visors to ensure that they get on the right bus.

Crane could not say if the 5-year-old was wearing the cap when he arrived at the transfer point but said he was confident he had it on when he left the kindergarten.

Stoddart Elementary, located on Fisher Street, has 306 students in grades one through five, but Crane said not all the students ride the bus.

"Stoddart is mainly a walking school," he said.

Three to four teachers generally oversee bus transfers at Stoddart.

"We always have students who get confused, but we do everything we can do to keep them safe," Crane said.

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Classroom buzz

Cell phone use has become the elephant in the room at eastern Idaho schools

In the old days, the smack of a student chewing gum in class was enough to earn a teacher's tongue-lashing or even a visit to the principal's office.

So imagine how infuriating it is these days for a teacher giving a pre-algebra lesson to notice several students furtively text-messaging in the back of the classroom.

The problem has gotten so bad that teachers and administrators around eastern Idaho -- and the country -- are trying to find a way to curb the phenomenon.

Some, including the Fremont School District, have resorted to banning cell phones from school property.

Most just prohibit their use during class time.

Still, teenagers can't always be trusted to follow the rules, and mere prohibition hasn't curtailed the activity as much as some educators had hoped. Bonneville Joint School District 93 officials, for example, became so desperate that they looked at the possibility of purchasing equipment to scramble cellular signals.

"It's a huge problem," Hillcrest High School Principal Scott Miller said. "You talk to any one of our teachers and they'll say it also."

Last year, teachers confiscated 361 cell phones. Hillcrest has 1,260 students.

Like most area schools, Hillcrest's policy says cell phones cannot be accessed in the classroom. Penalties range from returning confiscated phones to parents to suspension for third-time offenders.

Miller said some students have become so desperate to hold on to their cell phones that they'll carry broken decoys lest their primary device gets taken away. They've become that sophisticated.

"If they would put that much effort into their school work, oh my gosh, we'd be so much better off," he said.

The problem Miller and other educators face is that their options are limited.

For one thing, many parents see value in being able to contact their children at a moment's notice in case of an emergency, said George Boland, superintendent for Idaho Falls School District 91.

That's why District 91 officials are hesitant to move forward with a policy outright banning cell phones in school, though the Fremont School District became one of the few districts in the state to go that route last month.

There is a way to block cell phone signals -- they're called jammers, and you can purchase them online, but they're illegal.

District 93 Health and Safety Coordinator Guy Bliesner recently discovered this while researching the possibility of scrambling cell phone signals.

The operation of transmitters designed to jam or block wireless communications is a violation of the federal Communications Act of 1934, punishable by a maximum \$11,000 fine and up to one year in jail. Only federal government agencies can use this type of equipment.

Cell phones are a problem, said Bliesner, who reports that they're common even among elementary school students. But they're also a wonderful means of communication, he said.

"What do you do?" Bliesner said. "We're all struggling for balance."

In regards to text-messaging, Bliesner calls the practice the "21st century equivalent of drawing pictures on the bathroom wall."

In District 93, the problem seems to be most common in the high schools.

"I have been a visitor at Hillcrest (last spring) and witnessed this to an extreme," Rocky Mountain Middle School Principal Shalene French said via e-mail, adding that she has some students who've run into trouble for texting but nothing as blatant as what she saw at Hillcrest.

District 91 isn't immune, either.

Daniel McCarthy, a junior at Idaho Falls High School, said he typically sees at least a few students texting during each class.

Students certainly abuse the technology, McCarthy said, but cell phones are still good tools for contacting parents if something important arises.

Idaho Falls High School students face similar penalties for cell phone usage as Hillcrest pupils, but maybe they'd be less inclined to reach for them if the penalties were as harsh as Lincoln High

School, where students can be kicked out of class for an entire two-week "block" if they're caught with a cell phone.

The gadgets cause distractions aplenty, Lincoln Principal Diane Rapp said. Still, she sees value in them.

"When your children are involved in a lot of extracurricular activities, it saves a lot of time and gas when you are picking them up from practice and activities," she said via e-mail.

Reporter Phil Davidson can be reached at 542-6750.

Painting over cell signals

In addition to cell phone jamming equipment, there's a paint that engineers say can block transmissions. A New York-based company called NaturalNano Inc. is marketing a paint that uses nanotechnology to block the calls, though it permits other frequencies, including those used for emergency broadcasts. Efforts to reach a spokeswoman for the company were unsuccessful.

Did you know?

Among 12- to 19-year-olds, 61 percent have cell phones, up from 25 percent in 2000, according to Teenage Research Unlimited. Nearly half of children ages 8 to 12 own cell phones in the U.S., according to a recent report by Nielsen Media Research.

Governor Otter disappointed in program producing Idaho doctors

BOISE (AP) -- A program to send Idaho students to Seattle to train them as doctors so they can then return home to practice has fallen short, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter said.

Otter, speaking Monday to a joint interim legislative committee on medical education, said

the program that reserves spots for Idaho students at the University of Washington School of Medicine is not up to meeting an increasing need for doctors in the state.

The program allows students from Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho to attend the medical school in Seattle for the same tuition paid by Washington students. The program, known as WWAMI, encourages graduates to choose careers in family practice medicine and to work in the Northwest.

"I'm terribly disappointed in WWAMI," Otter told the committee, the Idaho State Journal reported. "It's not doing its job."

The Idaho WWAMI office in Moscow did not immediately return a call from The Associated Press on Tuesday concerning how many Idaho doctors the program has produced.

Otter later clarified his comments and said the program has produced good doctors coming from Idaho, but that the state hasn't been able to retain enough of them once they have finished the program.

Idaho ranks 49th in the nation in number of doctors per 100,000 residents, according to the American Medical Association. The AMA said 40 percent of Idaho physicians are 55 or older, making it the sixth-oldest group of physicians in the nation.

Jon Hanian, Otter's spokesman, said the governor is concerned the current program will not be able to produce Idaho doctors fast enough to replace those who retire.

After Otter spoke Monday, the group heard from Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas, who wants to create a medical school at ISU.

He said the state could get its own medical school by 2011 if it passes the various levels of accreditation.